



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

### PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

**1. Project Title:** Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association

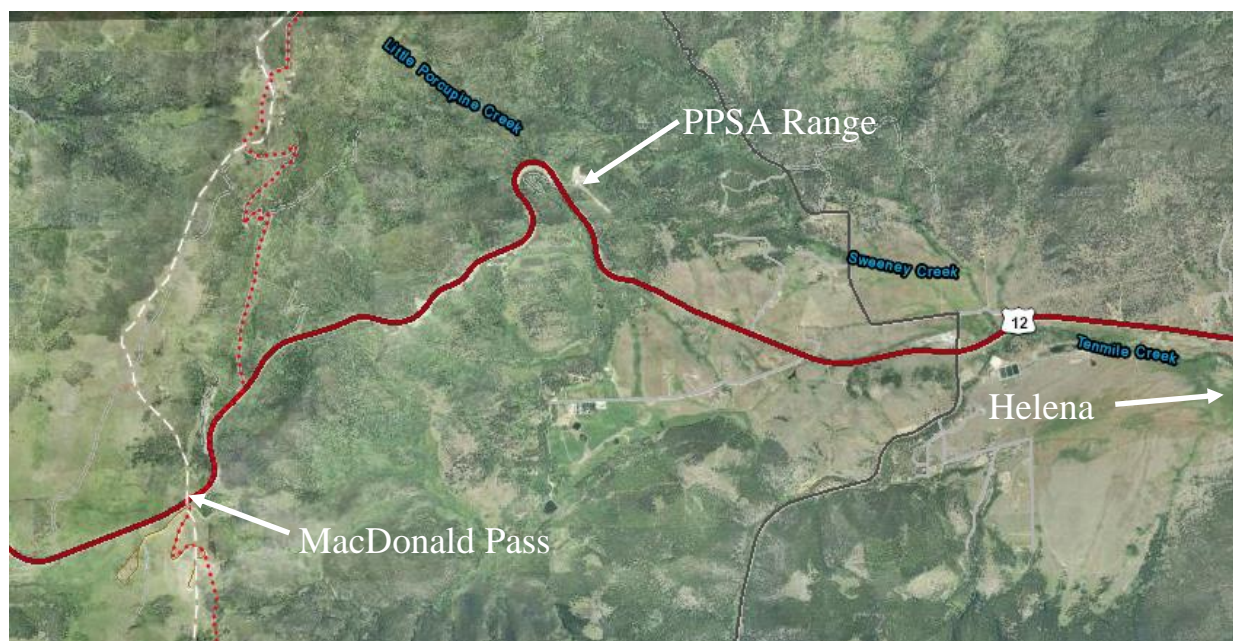
**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

The Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association (PPSA) proposes to improve and expand the PPSA Range by:

- Building a new Storage Building/Garage;
- Installing a solar power plant and bury power to the front gate and existing and proposed buildings;
- Installing an electronic card reader to the front gate.

**3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:**

The PPSA Range is located approximately 13 miles west of Helena, Montana, at mile marker 31 on U.S. Highway 12; Lat. 46.587357, Long. -112.263436; Section 29, Township 10 North, Range 5 West.

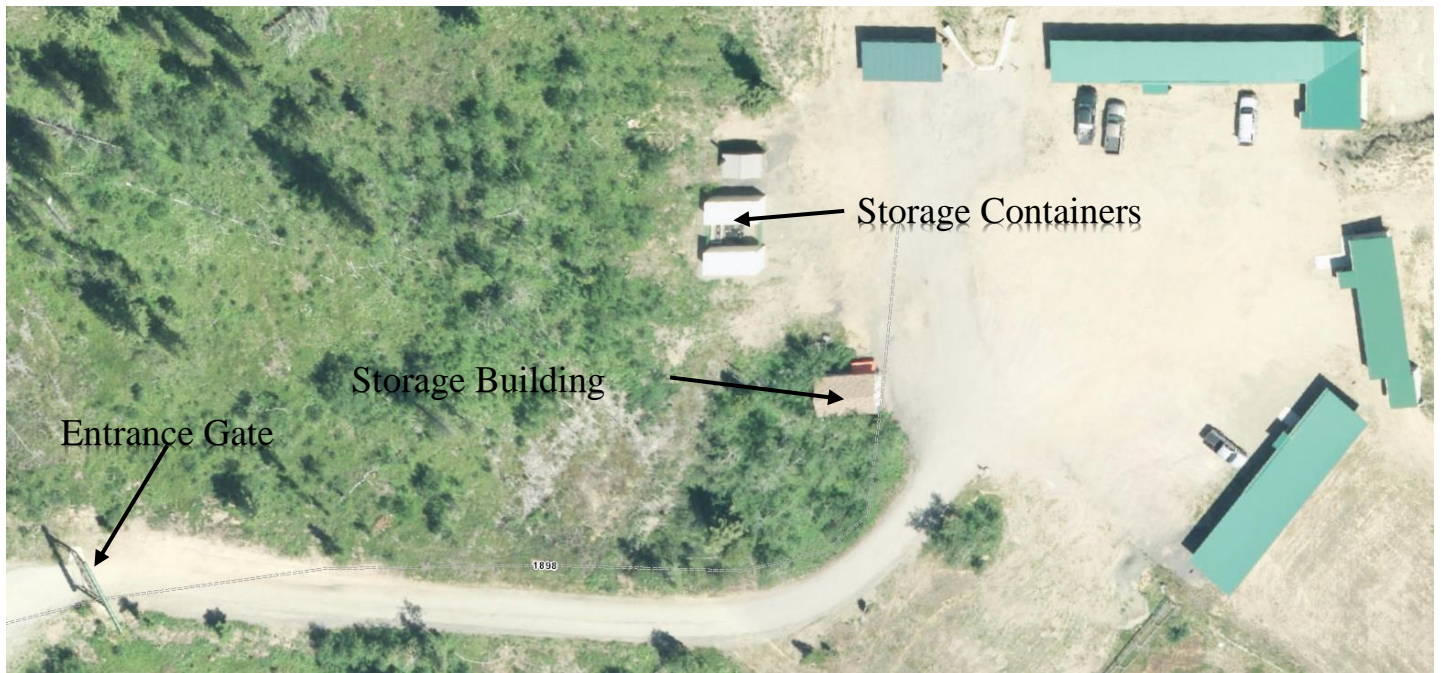


**Figure 1 – Location of Prickly Pear Shooting Association Range, Helena, Montana**

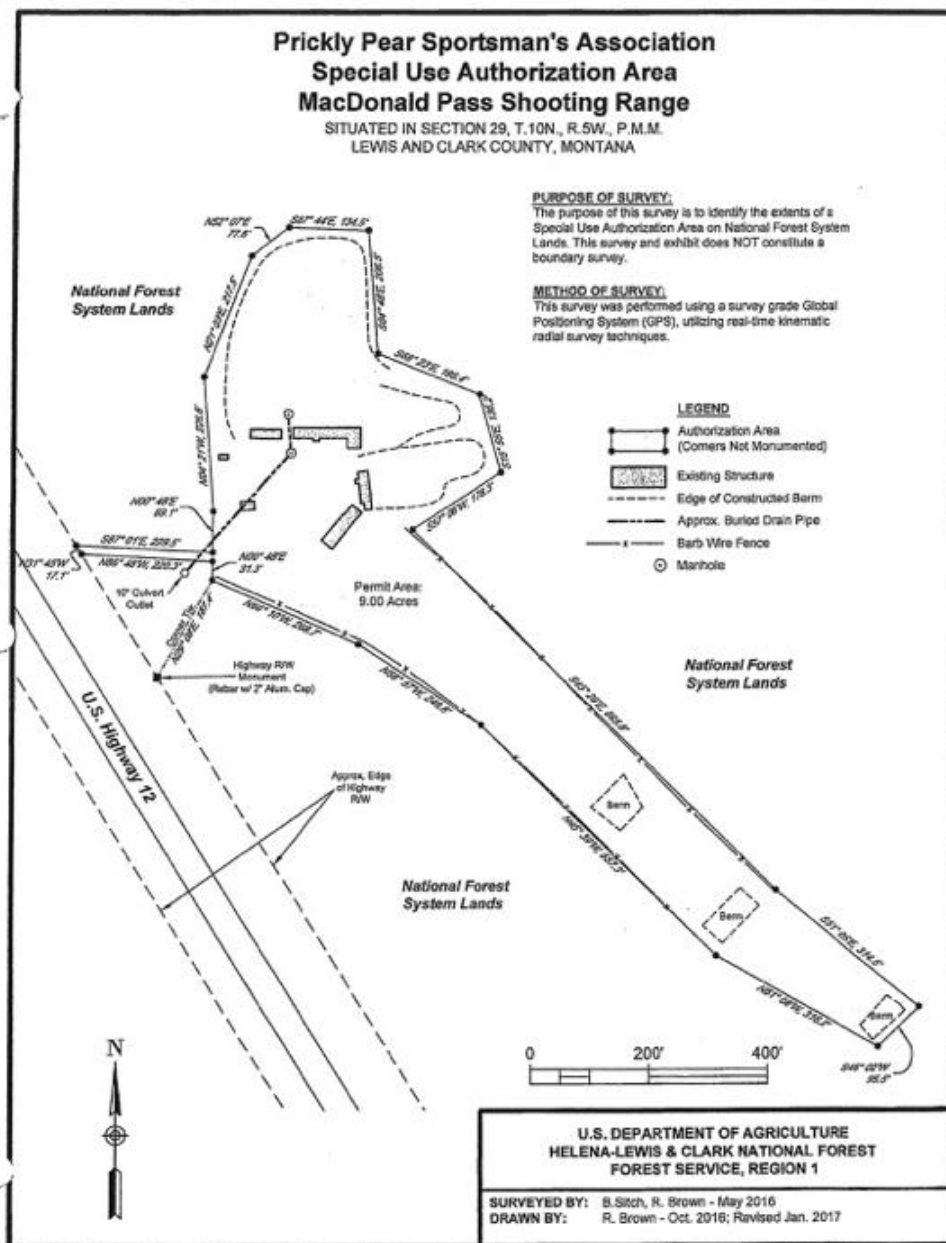




**Figure 2 – Aerial view of Prickly Pear Shooting Association Range, Helena, Montana**



**Figure 3- Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association Project Area, Helena, Montana**



**Figure 4- Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association Permit Area, Helena, Montana**

**4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:** MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

(a)(i) *Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license*



*and who pays club or organization membership fees;*

*(ii) May not limit the number of members;*

*(iii) May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*

*(iv) Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*

*(b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

## **5. Need for the Action(s):**

Currently, the existing 12' X 24' Storage Building/Garage is not large enough to securely store range vehicles and equipment. A 30' X 32' Storage Building would be large enough to adequately and securely accommodate range vehicles and equipment. Due to the complexities and regulations necessary to run power from Northwestern Energy to the range, the PPSA proposes to install a solar power plant. This would reduce the PPSA dependence on Northwestern Energy and would improve range safety and security.

## **6. Objectives for the Action(s):**

The goal of the proposed project is to expand and improve the safety, security, and capabilities of the PPSA Range by building a larger storage building, installing a solar power plant, burying power lines, and installing an electronic key card gate.

## **7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:**

The proposed project would involve approximately 9 acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land.

## **8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):**

The PPSA obtained a 20-year Special Use Permit from the Helena National Forest on January 1, 2021 effective through December 31, 2040 on 9 acres for the purpose of establishing a Shooting Range. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The range offers shooting opportunities for rifle and pistol.

## **9. Description of Project:**

PPSA plans to improve and expand the PPSA Range by:

- Replacing the 12' X 24' existing Storage Building/Garage with a 30' X 32' Storage Building on a monolith concrete slab. It would be sided and roofed to blend with the other buildings on the range. It would also be the terminus/hub of the buried powerline what will run from the proposed solar power plant.
- Installing a Solar Power Plant and burying power to the electronic card reader on the front gate, new Storage Building, and existing range buildings.
- Upgrading the existing front gate to an electric-powered gate with an electronic card reader to allow member and administrative access.

Proposed expenses include:

1.	Building foundation: Import, prep and fill for 30'X 30' building pad	\$11,500
2.	Storage Building construction	\$61,784
3.	Solar Inverter System: Off-grid Schneider Conext SW 4024 Inverter System; Solar Array 1.92, roof mounted.	\$15,100

4.	Electronic Key Card Controlled Access Gate	\$ 5,000
	Total Project Budget	\$93,384
	Total Funding Requested from FWP	<b>\$46,692</b>

**10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**

None

**Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

**Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$46,692

**11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:**

The PPSA Range is a private, non-profit range with an annual membership fee of \$50 per year for individuals and families. The range is open to visitors who are accompanied by a PPSA member for \$10 per day. Several organizations use the range each year, including Boy Scouts; Fish, Wildlife and Parks Hunters Safety; Postal Match; and Open House and Sight-In Day. In addition, two to four events and various shooting and gun safety classes are held at the range every year.

**12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:**

The PPSA Range is a private, nonprofit shooting range. The PPSA held meetings to seek member involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the association members, the U.S. Forest Service, and the associated project vendors and contractors.

**13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:**

Neil Horne, 419 Mill Road, Helena, MT 59602; (406) 431-0130.

**15. Other Pertinent Information:**

The PPSA Range is a private, non-profit shooting range. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is located in Townsend, Montana over 35 miles from the PPSA Range.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: February 1, 2021.

**PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES**

**Alternative A**, the **Proposed Alternative**, and **Alternative B**, the **No Action Alternative**, were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to construct a new Storage Building, install a Solar Power Plant, and install a Key Card Gate. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range

Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The No Action Alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

**Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:** Only the **Proposed Alternative** and the **No Action Alternative** were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

**Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:**

None. Only the **Proposed Alternative** and the **No Action Alternative** were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

**List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):**

None

**PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determine extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

**Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				<b>X</b>		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				<b>X</b>		<b>2</b>
3. Introduction of new species into an area				<b>X</b>		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				<b>X</b>		<b>4</b>
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				<b>X</b>		<b>5</b>
6. Existing water right or reservation				<b>X</b>		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				<b>X</b>		<b>7</b>
8. Air quality or						

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
objectionable odors				X		8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		11

**2. & 5.** There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife would likely temporarily leave the immediate area during construction of the proposed project.

**4.** The implementation of the proposed project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has already been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

**7.** The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but the developments will not substantially affect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and any disturbed areas will be reseeded.

**9.** This project takes place on federally-owned and controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations apply. No historical or archaeological cultural resources have been identified by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the proposed project site and the USFS approved the construction of the proposed project. Therefore, it is unlikely that cultural resources would be disturbed by the construction of the Storage Building.

**11.** The property is already used as a shooting range so the proposed project will have no additional impact on the aesthetics of the property.

**Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.**

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		

3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

5. The proposed projects would improve the safety for members and the public using the range.

7. The proposed developments will increase shooting opportunities within the community.

#### **PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The PPSA Proposed Alternative, to improve and expand the shooting facilities of the PPSA Range, is supported by its members and the U.S. Forest Service. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

#### **PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

**Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?** No

**Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or**



**potentially significant?** Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

**Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:**

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

**PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

**Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:**

1. Neil Horne, 419 Mill Road, Helena, MT 59602; (406) 431-0130.
2. MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

**EA prepared by:**

Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

**Date Completed:**

April 14, 2021

**Describe public involvement, if any:**

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the ***Helena Independent Record, Helena, MT*** announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.